

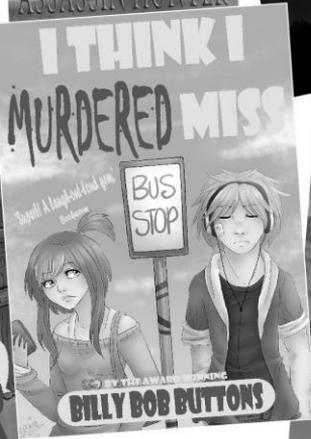
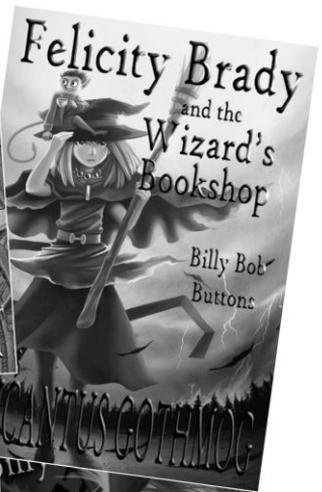
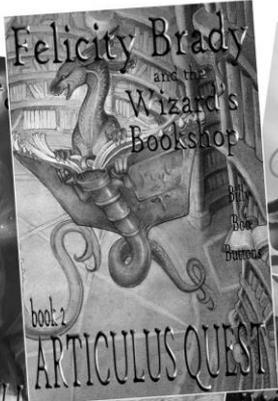
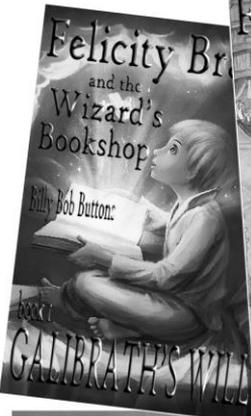


BILLY BOB BUTTONS is the award-winning author of eleven children's novels including the Rubery Book Award FINALIST, Felicity Brady and the Wizard's Bookshop, the much loved The Gullfoss Legends, TOR Assassin Hunter, TOR Wolf Rising, the hysterical Muffin Monster and the UK People's Book Prize WINNER, I Think I Murdered Miss.

He is also a PATRON OF READING.

Born in the Viking city of York, he and his wife, Therese, a true Swedish girl from the IKEA county of Småland, now live in Stockholm and London. Their twin girls, Rebecca and Beatrix, and little boy, Alfred, inspire Billy Bob every day to pick up a pen and work on his books.

When not writing, he enjoys tennis and playing 'MONSTER!' with his three children.





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Published by THE WISHING SHELF PRESS, UK.
ISBN 978 0 9574767 8 3

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Printed and bound by PRINTING TIME, www.printing-time.com

Edited by Alison Emery, Therese Råsbäck and Svante Jurnell.

Cover by Sarah Boxall. www.little-miss-boxie.com

Page 65/66. Quote from Star Trek II, The Wrath of Khan, Paramount Pics, 1982.

For Saleem and his wonderful family

NOTE

Simon, the hero of this book, has Asperger's syndrome. It is when a person finds it difficult to tell others what they need and how they feel. They also find it difficult to know how others feel and what is the 'normal' thing to do. Often, but not always, a person with Asperger's can be very, very clever and can have overly-strong interests. Simon, for example, is obsessed by Star Trek. Both children and adults can suffer from it.

Interested in Asperger's syndrome?

www.autism.org.uk



I Think I Murdered Miss

YESTERDAY



Chapter 1

A BIG SCARY NOTHINGNESS

MY NAME IS SIMON SPITTLE AND I THINK - NO, I KNOW, I murdered Miss Belcher. I don't carry a gun. Or a knife. Or even a toothpick, but yesterday, in French, I wished for her to be run over by a bus and, later that very day, she was. A big, red double-decker with yellow wheels and a picture of a clown on the bonnet.

Billy Bob Buttons

A Billy Smart's Circus bus.

I did not see it happen but Isabella did and she told me Miss left this world with an almighty 'SPLAT!' Up to sixty percent of a human body is water so I think 'SPLAT!' is probably correct.

My problem is, I don't like French. Or German. Or Spanish. Or even English. They upset me. The teachers tell me a rule; tell me how important it is to follow the rule, then they tell me when NOT to follow the rule. 'I before e,' they say. 'Jot this down in your book, Simon. I before e.' Then they say, 'Except.' 'Except after c,' they say. The word 'Except' exists simply to bewilder, puzzle and perplex. 'Except' upsets me terribly along with 'but', 'however', 'nevertheless' and 'willy-nilly'.

I like maths. And physics. And chemistry. $1+1=2$, $E=mc^2$, drop a spoonful of nitro-glycerine ($H_3H_5N_3O_9$)

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on the floor and it will always, ALWAYS blow your foot off. No excepts, no buts, no however's and no willy-nilliness. Even history is OK. Lots of facts in history. The Battle of Hastings was in 1066. Thomas Crapper invented the loo. End of story. THE END! Lots of lists in history. I like lists a lot.

But French is messy and messy to me is like spiders to an arachnophobe. And Miss Belcher is - was, my French teacher. Not that she was from France. She was from Glasgow which is 896.21 kilometres from Paris. I know. I checked.

Anyway, I had French yesterday, my sixth class of the day, and she - Miss - was not in a very good mood. Isabella told me, so I knew. Isabella's smart, but in a different way to me, so she can always tell. I never can.

It was 2.15 on a Tuesday afternoon and this is what

Billy Bob Buttons

happened...

'Today we will work on verbs,' Miss Belcher barks, marching in. Everybody sits, stool legs scraping on the vinyl floor. Everybody but me.

'Kitty Maddocks, is that gum in your mouth? It is! Then swallow it, child. Anthony, sit up properly. PROPERLY!' She sniffs. She sniffs a lot. She's an habitual sniffer. Her eyes fall on me and she sighs. Then, in the French way, shortening the 'i', she says, 'Simon. Sit!'

Amid the sniggers and elbow nudging of the other kids, my bottom finds the top of the stool. But it is important she tells me or how will I know?

'Now! Pens down and TRY to copy my accent. After me. Chanter.'

'Chanter,' the class mutters back.

'No, no, NO!' She thumps her desk on the last

I Think I Murdered Miss

climactic 'NO'. 'With gusto, children. GUSTO! Now. Chanter.'

'CHANTER!' her students bellow.

Sullenly, I watch her. Not all of her, just her eyebrows. They always wriggle so and remind me of two furry caterpillars fighting on her brow. My eyes drift lower. She is very big-bosomed and very, very big-bottomed, and sort of reminds me of a bottle of Coca-Cola. A short bottle. I want to tell you how short but my ruler is only thirty centimetres long.

My gaze wanders to my desk and my...

Where IS my ruler?

'Simon!'

'SIMON!' the class howls back in unruly delight.

'No, no. Simon! Zip up your bag and put it on the floor.'

'I can't find my ruler,' I tell her. It is new; a birthday

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present from my dad. A Star Wars ruler with a Darth Vader sticker on it. I much prefer Star Trek to Star Wars but Dad will be upset if I can't find it.

Miss Belcher tuts and screws up her lips in such a way they remind me of a cat's bottom. 'You don't need your ruler. This is French, silly boy, not maths.'

'I wish it was maths,' I mutter into the murky depths of my satchel.

'Simon!' Blowing up like a bullfrog, she stomps over to me. 'Put your bag by your feet NOW! Or I will send you to Mr Cornfoot's room.'

Mr Cornfoot is the school janitor and his room is in the spidery cellar. Between 1751 and 1863, the school was a prison and they say murderers were kept down there.

But I just nod indifferently and glower at my desk. On it is my ink pen and two centimetres to the left of

I Think I Murdered Miss

my ink pen is my Starship Enterprise NCC-1701-shaped rubber. But two centimetres to the left of my rubber there is a

big

scary

NOTHINGNESS

And it's not in my bag. 'It's not in my bag,' I tell her.

The class starts to giggle and Kitty Maddocks, the girl who swallowed the gum, starts to wheeze.

I feel so cross, so - out of sorts. How can she be this stupid? Why can she not understand? I begin to

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rock on my stool, my eyelids fluttering. I can feel the anger welling up in me, flooding my belly like hot bubbling acid. 'I can't find my ruler.' I say it much louder now. 'And it's not in my bag.'

One desk over, Isabella whispers, 'Calm down.' And a girl at the front of the classroom bellows, 'Miss! I think Kitty's choking.'

With a python-like hiss, Miss Belcher turns her back on me. 'Stop being so silly, Bridget. And Kitty, stop coughing. It's annoying.' She sniffs, juts out her jaw and stomps back to her desk. 'Now, BEGIN! Chanter.'

'Chanter,' burble the class. A class full of expectant eyes.

'Manger.'

'Manger.'

'What you lost, Nutter?' I look over at Anthony, the

I Think I Murdered Miss

school bully. He is grinning away like a stowaway cat on a fishing trawler.

'I can't find my ruler,' I tell him, 'and it's not in my...'

'SIMON!' Miss Belcher howls, no longer in the French way, but with a strong Scottish lilt.

'MISS! HURRY! Kitty's all purple - and her right eye's sort of - bulging out.'

'BRIDGET!' she yells, her cheeks now all blotchy and red.

Then I begin to yell too, and when I yell I find it very difficult to stop. I growl and snarl. I kick over my desk. I even thump the wall. The class is no longer giggling. They just sit and watch me explode, chins to chests. The best show in town. Isabella is trying to pacify me. 'You probably just dropped it,' she is saying. 'Help me to look.'

Billy Bob Buttons

Then...

I do it.

It is 2.43 on a Tuesday afternoon.

'Go to hell,' I hiss. And I wish fervently for Miss Belcher to be hit by a bus.

At 5.39, that very day...

She is.